

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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COUNTRY: Cuba
 SUBJECT: Western Pinar del Rio Province: Militia; Parachute Drop Fields; Ports, Port Garrisons and Landing Beaches; Military Establishments
 REPORT NO.: OO-R 3,170,616
 DATE-DISTR: 7 November 1960
 NO. PAGES: 13
 REFERENCES: CD/OD-Cuba 33369
 DATE OF INFO: To Mid-Aug 60
 PLACE & DATE ACC: Throughout Western Pinar del Rio Province/To Mid-Aug 60

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

SOURCE: US national; former non-commissioned officer in the US Marine Corps.
 Source is a 23 year old ex-Marine who spent the period from February 1959 through July 1960 serving in the Cuban Army and the Cuban Air Force. He obtained his discharge from the Cuban Air Force in June 1960 and returned to the US via Mexico City on 30 Aug 60. According to source, he had been nominated by the Marine Corps to enroll in the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps at a US university, even though he had not finished his high school education. He reportedly did not accept this offer because he was much more interested in Special Forces type activity, and this led to his decision to leave the Marine Corps and a short time later to enlist in the Cuban Army. He appears to be a keen observer. While source's plans are indefinite, he should be available for further interview during the next few weeks (late October - November 1960).

Militia at San Julian Base

1. The major military establishment in western Pinar del Rio is the San Julian Air Base located about 15 miles east of the port of La Fe and about 10 miles north of the town of Las Martinas. I served most of my tour of duty in the Cuban Air Force (December 1959 - June 1960) at San Julian. San Julian Air Base has two runways (8/26 and 1/19), each seven thousand ft in length, 150 ft wide, and both with excellent asphalt surfaces. The base is in a relatively level plains area surrounded on the west, south and east sides by giant thorn bushes. This base would be extremely difficult to defend even with experienced troops, and as it existed up to the time I left it was very easy to enter and lightly defended.
2. A Civilian Aeronautical Technical School for mechanics was located at the center of the base. Since February 1960 this school has served as Headquarters for the Rural Police Officers School (militia) and in August 1960 from 500-800 militia were based for training at the school. The head of the school is Capt FNU. Mata, a Cuban negro, the ex-adjutant to Maj. "Che" Guevarra.
3. Some of the militia in training at the San Julian base graduated from a cadre infantry course (about three months in duration) on 30 Jul 60. Instruction was provided by personnel of the Rural Police Officers School under Capt Mata. The training was not at all thorough and consisted of a rather hopeless mixture of basic drill, target practice, and guerrilla tactics. The officers of the school would argue among themselves as to how much time should be devoted to drill as opposed to guerrilla tactics.

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for instance, and as a consequence, sufficient time was not spent on either subject. Target practice consisted only of firing a few rounds from the old US Springfield rifle, the Brazilian Mauser, or later, the Czech semi-automatic carbine.

The militia at San Julian Air Base were armed (as of August 1960) with 300 bolt action Brazilian Mausers, a small supply of Czech semi-automatic carbines (which arrived in August 1960) and some old US Springfield rifles. Very little ammunition was available for the Brazilian Mausers. The militia in this area had no canteens, picks, or other equipment. Barracks facilities on the base were primitive, although new barracks were under construction.

Parachute Drop Fields

5. In the immediate vicinity of the San Julian military establishment are five very large farm fields (the nearest located one-half mile southwest of the base) which could serve as ideal drop zones for paratroops or equipment. I made a number of jumps into these fields. I once jumped into a field on the outskirts of Cayuco (the field is located about three miles outside of Cayuco near the highway from that city to La Fo) wearing my old US Marine Corps fatigues. As an experiment I spoke only English to the Cuban workers in this field and they did not appear to be at all surprised by this rather strange development. The only furor came when the MRA official in charge of the workers at the field drove up in his jeep, discovered that I was speaking English, and then proceeded to try to find an interpreter, not to interrogate me but merely to converse in a friendly fashion. It should be kept in mind that this jump was made about the time of the bombing of the sugar fields by "pirate" aircraft with attendant howls by the Castro regime that these attacks were US-inspired. I encountered no hostility on either this or several other jumps in the San Julian area made in my old US Marine Corps fatigues and speaking English to the natives after I landed.
6. Four other fields in the vicinity of the San Julian base should be mentioned as suitable for jumps. Two adjacent fields separated by about 100 yards of vegetation are located about four miles west (bearing 250°) from the airfield. The other two fields are located south of the base near the road connecting Las Martinis and Cortes. Another suitable area is located between 5-10 miles northwest of the San Julian base in an expanse of rolling hills which are fairly clear of large vegetation.

Ports, Port Harbors and Beaches

7. The fishing port of Cortes is located roughly 15 miles southeast of San Julian, and an ideal landing beach stretches from the entrance of Cortes harbor for some five miles to the west. The small fishing village of La Fumia is located one mile west of Cabo Frances. Rock cliffs varying from 20-30 ft in height begin west of La Fumia. Cabo Frances has a blinking type navigation light on a 30 ft steel tower. The beach east of the La Fumia cliffs is about 50 ft wide at low tide and consists of firm sand with a steep gradient. The shoreline is covered with trees and shrubbery. The only settlement in the 20 or so miles of shoreline stretching from Cayuco to Cortes is La Fumia, with a population estimated at about 250. Rocky, firm ground with thick vegetation stretches back from the beach for 4-9 miles to the nearest paved road running from Cortes to Las Martinis and Cayuco. A dirt road connects La Fumia with the paved road and a second dirt road begins at La Fumia and runs east to Cortes on the edge of the shore (about 30 ft inside the trees and vegetation along the beach).
8. The port of Cortes is defended by 10 badly disciplined sailors under the command of a chief warrant officer. They are armed with Springfield rifles plus two Thompson sub-machine guns. These men also possess a jeep and a small fishing boat but they do not patrol the area. The town of Las Martinis has a 50-man militia force which I trained myself and led on combat patrols against the anti-revolutionaries in the area.

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9. West of San Julian Air Base about 10 miles is the small port of La Fe which is defended by about 15 sailors under the command of a petty officer second-class. This force has one small fishing boat and a radio with a 120 ft antenna for contact with the naval command at Mariel. La Fe has a fine, small harbor and a wide, navigable river flows into the harbor about four miles north of La Fe.
10. The large, sandy fields near San Julian are ungraded and generally are used for the growing of peanuts and tomatoes. A number of large hills are located near the town of Mendoza. One of these, almost inaccessible with 100 ft cliffs, commands all highway approaches from Havana to this western area. Travel in this area is restricted to the roads because of the impenetrable thorn bushes which abound, and the roads are all located within range of small mortar fire. These hills appear to be ignored by the local command.
11. Landings by anti-Castro forces on the north shore of this area (10 Jan 60) were compromised by betrayal and personnel were captured upon landing. Aircraft dropped arms by parachute at the time of the landings but all arms were captured. It appeared that the arms were dropped blind with no receiving party.

Military Establishments

12. The military headquarters for Pinar del Rio province is located about six miles west of Mendoza. The commander of Pinar del Rio is Maj Dermidio Escalona who fought against the Batista regime in the mountains of this province during 1958. Maj Escalona lives adjacent to his regimental headquarters, a large military establishment of about 400 troops. I believe the radio call sign for this headquarters is H-21. The headquarters has a few, badly located 50 caliber machine guns for anti-aircraft defense. The town of Mendoza contains a force of 10 men with three motorcycles and one automobile but the force rarely patrols. Camp contains a military barracks in the center of the town manned by about 150 men. These men are armed with Carand and Springfield rifles, three or four 30-caliber machine guns (heavy), two Gorman M1-34's, and some San Cristobal carbines. The force also has three jeeps and one radio car at its disposal. The barracks radio station is called H-23.

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